

JOB SERIES EIGHT
HOW TO CULTIVATE WHO WE NEED TO SURVIVE IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S TROUBLES
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JOB 42: 1-17; JAMES 5:10-11; GENESIS 6:5-6; JOHN 11:35; AND LUKE 10:21; ;
EPHESIANS 1:15-19; 3:14-19; PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11; COLOSSIANS 1:9-12; 2
CORINTHIANS 4:16-18; PSALM 78:18-19, 23-31; 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10; GENESIS
28:18-22; GENESIS 32:9-12; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4
(SERMON 1587)

Remember that Job was involved in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan—between good and evil. I hope you have figured out that we are all involved in that battle—to varying degrees and levels. We all experience difficulty and suffering—and how we handle it makes all the difference in the world. I want us to handle it well.

SLIDE #1: Mention the name Gustav Mahler and you will receive a sharp reaction from any informed musician.

Gustav Mueller lived in the last part of the 19th century. Bohemian conductor and composer for ten years at the imperial opera in Vienna. Wonderful position.

There is a depth of melodies and harmonies and counter-melodies in his music. You'd think the composer lived a life of privilege and training. But the fact is his life was marked by tragedy. Loss of seven brothers and sisters as he was growing up. In fact, he said,

SLIDE #2: "The coffin was a regular piece of furniture in our home."

His father was a cruel and brutal alcoholic. His mother was a vulnerable invalid at the mercy of her husband's blows.

And Mueller growing out of that womb of woe grew up and married and lost a lovely daughter at age of 4 and never really got over that loss.

And yet, on top of all that, because he was Jewish, he was forced to leave his position at the Vienna opera house. Shortly thereafter, told he had a bad heart and not long to live.

In all of that he composed his magnificent symphonies.

Mueller had a love of nature, was a powerful swimmer, had a magnificent laugh and a huge love of life and all of this is in his music – as well as sadness and anger about his illness and the brutality of his father and the vulnerability of his mother. In fact, Mueller thought he should put everything in his life into his music."

While his life moved toward a premature death, his music lives on to thrill hearts the world over.

That is true for many people. Found a way to overcome difficulty and despair and weave together a life of beauty and meaning that intertwines with every experience they have ever had.

Is it any wonder that the life of Job has ministered to hearts the world over? Is it any surprise that those depressed after a few of the Psalms, quickly turn to the Book of Job?

Several sermons based on 30+ chapters of Job—swing now toward the end of the book with our understandings for today.

Let's take a moment for a little bit of REVIEW on the lessons we have gleaned already from Job—lessons on how to handle trials and insights on helping those in the midst of them.

Job 1-2 Job goes through his trials.

Job 3 is the most depressed chapter in the Bible: OK to be depressed.

Job 2 Job's comforters came and did a miserable job. Why they are called "Job's comforters."

SLIDE #3: The proper response to the emotionally hurt and distressed is to allow them to mourn and then comfort them.

SLIDE #4: Romans 12:15b: Paul said: *"Mourn with those who mourn"*

Mom: "I tried to get them to stop crying. I was wrong."

SLIDE #5: Matthew 5:4: Jesus said: *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

NOTICE WHAT JESUS DID NOT SAY: "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN..."

SLIDE #6: "...For they shall be told why they shouldn't feel that way." No.

SLIDE #7: "...For they shall receive a pep talk." No.

SLIDE #8: "...For they shall be given logic and reasons." No.

SLIDE #9: "...For they shall be told how to do it better next time."

SLIDE #10: "...For they shall be told why it is really their fault."

SLIDE #11: "...For they shall be told how to fix it."

SLIDE #12: "...For they shall be led into an argument."

SLIDE #13: "...For they shall be told, don't cry. it really doesn't hurt. it is not as bad as you think it is. buck up, "bucko."

SLIDE #14: "...For If you leave them alone it will all be OK."

SLIDE #15: "Blessed are they who mourn, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED."

SLIDE #16: *ONLY MOURNING AND COMFORTING HEALS HURTS.*

After mourning and comforting we continue our healing process by looking for purpose in our sufferings. We begin to ask the *Why* questions. "Why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this? Is there any good purpose for my suffering?"

The answers here can help promote our long term healing.

For most of 40 chapters Job is asking the Why questions on one level or another.

SLIDE #17: No one wants to suffer for nothing (kidney stone). We handle it better if we are suffering for something (having a baby). We handle it best if we understand how we are suffering for Someone (God Himself).

I gave you a list of nine reasons to consider that cover most of the Biblical reasons for suffering:

SLIDE #18: 1. Am I Paying A Price For Following Christ? (Acts 5:41; Philippians 1:29)

SLIDE #19: 2. Am I Suffering For Doing Good? (1 Peter 3:17; 4:12-19)

SLIDE #20: 3. Is This Discipline (Punishment) For A Sin I've Committed? (Joshua 7:10-12; John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32; James 5:13-16)

SLIDE #21: 4. Is This Intended To Keep Me From Future Sin? (2 Corinthians 12:7)

SLIDE #22: 5. Is This Designed To Increase My Faith And God Dependence? (Matthew 8:23-27)

SLIDE #23: 6. Is This An Instructive Experience (Discipline) Designed For My Personal Growth and/or Spiritual Maturity? (Job 23:10; Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 12:4-11)

SLIDE #24: 7. Is God Using This So That His Glory May Be On Display In My Life? (John 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

SLIDE #25: 8. Is God Using This To Mold Me Into The Image Of Christ? (Romans 8:28-29)

SLIDE #26: 9. Is It Time To Die? (Psalm 90:10; John 11:4)

During this time we are working through the five stages of loss and grief:

■ SLIDE #27: Shock/Denial

Anger

Depression

Disorganization

Acceptance/Adjustment

■ SLIDE #28: Now, Let's Move To The More Relational And Emotional Side Of Healing Our Suffering: "NOW THAT THIS HAS HAPPENED TO ME, HOW AM I GOING TO RESPOND?"

The answer to this *How* question is best answered in terms of our relationships. God never intended for us to handle our sufferings alone.

■ SLIDE #29: James 5:10-11: *Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

What the Lord finally brought about: Go to the end of the book. See how it ends.

READ JOB 42:1-6: He finds God.

READ JOB 42:7-17.

His friends comfort him and bring gifts.

God restores and pours out blessing.

God is involved and others are involved in his healing.

Now I understand why James says: *The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

Compassion because God never stopped caring for Job.

Mercy because Job did sin in his pride and God gave him mercy—this is the sermon for next time.

Explain the repentance is for next sermon.

If we are going to thrive in the midst of our sufferings we will only succeed in terms of the depth of our sustained relationships.

■ SLIDE #30: 1. CULTIVATE A DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST IN ORDER TO FIND MEANING, COMPASSION, MERCY AND THE GRACE TO GO ON.

Relationship with Dr. Hargrove like cultivating long-term relationship with God. Doctor who understands, cares and sympathizes. Just beginning practice in Tucson when we moved here. "Roger, ohhhhh, I'm so sorry you've been living through that." Bedside manner.

Christianity introduced to the world a God who suffers, alongside the image of a God who creates and commands.

■ SLIDE #31: Genesis 6:5-6: *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

■ SLIDE #32: NASB: "And the Lord was sorry that he made man on the earth, and He was grieved in his heart."

KJV: *And it grieved him at his heart.*

Living: *It broke his heart.*

■ SLIDE #33: John Calvin: "...the pain of the divine love at the sin of man signifies that God is hurt no less by the atrocious sins of men than if they pierced His heart with mortal anguish."

Faced with crowds at Lazarus' funeral, Jesus wept.

Faced with the inner turmoil of a soul in the agony of searching despair, Jesus tells the Rich Young Ruler exactly what is needed, and then is filled with compassion when the young man makes the wrong choice (Luke 10:21: "intestines spilled out").

■ SLIDE #34: If God is real, where was God during the Holocaust? Why did He not intervene to stop it? Why didn't He strike Hitler dead in 1939 and spare millions of lives and untold suffering? The answer has to do with our world-view. Evil world, Broken world.

Where was God? He was weeping with the victims.

■ SLIDE #35: September 11 WTC. Where was God?

God was weeping over the sin and evil and pain and suffering.

I don't know what it means for God to suffer. I know that God doesn't have real eyes and real tear ducts to cry, and real nerve endings to feel pain. But I know that the anguish I feel is a reflection of God's anguish and God's compassion.

■ SLIDE #36: What does it do to your heart to know that God is often crying for you when you are going through your sufferings?

As we move deeper into God's heart in the realm of pain and suffering. It is time that we learn to

■ SLIDE #37: "pray from the inside out."

Dr. Hargrove always looks from the inside out.

Bronchitis, Knees, Acid reflux, back pain-disks,

Long term relationship: He knows what is best for me.

God is much more concerned that we are praying for our spirit which is eternal than for our body which is decaying and will soon perish.

READ Paul's Prayers for the inner man: Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12.

When we pray in the area of our spirit God will answer prayers for the maturity of our inside spirit 1000 times out of 1000: "Make me a person of wisdom. Pour in the power. Strength to endure this trial."

When we pray in the area of our souls (minds), God is often hindered from answering. The problem is my will. "God, help me to get over my bitterness?" Well, much of that is in our control." Help me to be morally pure." Well, He can help us all He wants to, but ultimately, the final choice is up to us.

Prayer in the area of our bodies is the place where God has the most difficulty answering—Why? Because our bodies are so temporal.

"God heal my body...make me well...change these circumstances..." We are totally obsessed with removing pain and tragedies and problems—and God is totally obsessed with making us God-sensitized in our inner spirit—because this is the only part of us which is eternal.

People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles, any more than children who pray for bicycles, good grades, or boyfriends get them as a result of praying. But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered.

Satan moves from the outside in.

We get all hyped up over some healing. We get all in a tizzy. But the angels rejoice when we are healed? No. When a soul is saved. That is an eternal thing.

Here is an eternal presumption: God is more interested in the eternal than the temporary. He will sacrifice the temporary (body, situation, etc) every time if that is what it needed to develop and save and mature the eternal spirit.

Have to get in line with God's intentions. When my will is not in line with God there is conflict. Guess who is going to win?

If we pray without being enlightened, without knowing His will, God sometimes gives us what we request—with devastating results.

Psalm 78:18-19, 23-31: Tired of manna. Wanted quail; God sent quail and many got sick and died.

Story of woman with sick baby. Pray for my baby to be healed...lived to watch son mount stairs of village gallows to be hanged for murdering family of six next door.

SLIDE #38: God gives us the grace when we need it—often not a minute earlier: “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Spurgeon: Martyr's grace

Notice the growth in maturity in Jacob's life as revealed by his prayers in suffering when he first began his walk with God (Genesis 28:18-22) and twenty years later (Genesis 32:9-12).

READ GENESIS 28:18-22.

Jacob's prayer here is nothing less than an attempt to “bribe” God to make things work out for him. He is prepared to make it worth God's while to protect him and make him prosper.

His attitude, much like that of so many people today facing illness or misfortune, is expressed in this way, “Please God, make this work out well and I'll do whatever You want. I'll stop lying, I'll go to services regularly – You name it and I'll do it if You just grant me this.”

Jacob is away for 20 years. During that time he gets married and has many children. His business acumen is acute. He accumulates a small fortune of flocks and herds and one day it is time to go home.

He comes to the same river bank where he prayed that night in chapter 28. Again, he is anxious and afraid. He knows that the next day he will have to confront his brother Esau, who had threatened to kill him twenty years earlier. Once again, Jacob prays. But this time, because he is twenty years older and wiser, he offers a very different prayer than he did as a boy.

READ GENESIS 32:9-12.

In other words, Jacob's prayer no longer tries to make a deal with God, nor does he present God with a long list of demands – food, clothing, prosperity, a safe return.

Jacob doesn't ask God to make Esau go away, to cripple Esau's strength or magically erase his memory. Jacob asks God only to make him less afraid, by letting him know that He is at his

side, so that whatever the next day might bring, he will be able to handle it because he won't have to face it alone.

■ SLIDE #39: 2. CULTIVATE A CLUSTER OF CLOSE FRIENDS IN ORDER TO FIND COMFORT, COMPANIONSHIP, ENCOURAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND THE REASONS TO GO ON.

Don't go through suffering alone. Not good to be alone: need wife, children, parents, and friends.

He got right with his God and he got right with his friends.

READ JOB 42:10-11.

Now is the time for time for encouragement, advice, lessons, logic and reasons, understanding, dealing responsibly with guilt—and more comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

A Tiny Reed

■ SLIDE #40: A tiny reed is trampled by the wind (*tiny reed, small me*)

And ruthlessly contorted without cause.

Bending now in half the reed attempts (*knocked down, tried to stand up*)

To lift its head to its noblest heights.

■ SLIDE #41: Frantically it tries without success

'Til suddenly reality sets in.

"I'll never be what I thought I could be;

This hindrance will forever be my fate. (*Despair—Hindrance: we all carry something—discovered yours yet? Anxiety attacks*)

■ SLIDE #42: Peering upward from its humble state

As a person longing to be freed,

The tiny reed is startled by the sound

Of whisperings coming from surrounding reeds: (*listen to what others say*)

■ SLIDE #43: "This person that you feel you can't escape

Will never have the power you perceive.

For see, we all have our own wounds to show

Which cause us more on others to rely." (*we need each other—don't get isolated*)

■ SLIDE #44: 3. CULTIVATE A DEEP-SEATED LOVE FOR YOURSELF SO THAT YOU REALLY CARE ENOUGH TO MAKE SOMETHING SPECIAL WITH THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

Remember the Great Commandment: Love God and love your neighbor "as you love yourself."

Too many Christians feel it is not OK to love themselves.

Don't love Self—reliance, centeredness, condemnation

Do love the person God has made us in Christ: Come to peace with who you are. Like the person you are.

Steve Dowdle: "So many Xns emotionally wounded and it keeps them from living any sort of resurrected spiritual life."

■ SLIDE #45: William Backus: *Telling Yourself the Truth*

David Seamands: *Healing Damaged Emotions*

Do you ever wonder how the ending of the book of Job got that way?

More children, great children, well-parented, successful business; saw great-great grandchildren. Job cared enough about himself to put his life back together.

Mr. and Mrs. Job picked up the pieces together and built a new family to replace the ones who died—and rebuilt their business—and restored their relationships.

Archibald Macleish has given us his version of the Job story in a modern setting. The first half of his poetic drama “J.B.” retells the familiar story.

The last half leaves us hanging. More to God than revealed in the book of Job. In the play, God really lets Job down.

In the play Job goes back to his wife, and they prepare to go on living together and building a new family. Their love will provide the new children to replace the ones who died—and the companionship to rebuild their lives.

In the play’s moving last lines, Job’s wife says,”

SLIDE #46: The candles in the churches are out,
The stars have gone out in the sky
Blow on the coal of the heart
And we’ll see by and by...

I love the focus on each other—resolved faith that together all will be OK.

“Blow on the coal of the heart” for what little light and warmth we will be able to muster to sustain us.

Look inside and see the good things God planted there.

But don’t miss the point—

The candles in the churches are not out—unless we let them go out.

The stars in the sky have not gone out—unless we have no cultivated relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

SLIDE #47: Remember one of the most often recurring verses in the Bible: “And it came to pass...”

Bow our heads.

Don’t know where you are in all of this. “Move over, Job, I know exactly where you are.” I am there now.

Perhaps you’ve been through it and are better equipped to help those who go through it. You’d have no criticism for Job.

If you’re there and never found Christ – sad story for you when you work through all this without Christ you still won’t have peace. Maybe all of this is designed to bring you to the cross. I’d like to think that.

If you die today without Christ you have no idea what misery is all about. So come, today, don’t delay, to the prayer room. Counselors will help you find your way home. Christ died for the sins of the whole world.

Thank you, Father, for going with us to the Valley of the shadow of death and rescuing us there. Amen.